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Philippine Muslims on Screen: From Villains to Heroes

Abstract

Early portrayals of Philippine Muslims in film show them not only as a people who profess a “heathen religion” but also whose culture is dominated by notions of superiority and violence against women and non-Muslims. This presentation is largely due to the colonial legacies of Spain and the United States, whose respective occupation of the Philippines was met with resistance by Muslims. Such negative portrayals made their way into early films as indicated by *Brides of Sulu* (1934) and *The Real Glory* (1939). This paper argues that representations of Philippine Muslims in films changed over time, depending on the prevailing government policies and perceptions of people on Christian-Muslim relations. The other films included for this paper are *Badjao* (1957), *Perlas ng Silangan* (Pearl of the Orient, 1969), *Muslim Magnum .357* (1986), *Mistah: Mga Mandirigma* (Mistah: Warriors, 1994), *Bagong Buwan* (New Moon, 2001) and *Captive* (2012). This paper will put the films in the social and political context in which they were viewed – in the earlier years when Muslim-Christian negative perceptions were dominant, under governments where Muslims were viewed as the “other” and later, at a time when, as part of the responses to the Muslim rebellion, the Philippine government moved to officially consider Islam as part of Philippine heritage, and Muslims as Filipinos who happen to profess a different religion from the majority.

Author Notes

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Introduction

Muslims constitute an estimated five per cent of the Philippines' 100 million population. Previously concentrated in the southern part of the country, they are now visible in most regions as a result of internal migration and conversions that have taken place since the 1970s. Southern Philippine Muslims are both an ethnic and religious minority who experienced discrimination and marginalization from colonial times and even under the independent Philippine government.

Compared to other ethnic groups, Muslims have been the subjects of more films and yet, such films constitute only a very small part of Philippine cinema. The films¹ included in this study are: *Brides of Sulu* (1934/1937), *The Real Glory* (1939), *Badjao*² (1957), *Perlas ng Silangan* (Pearl of the Orient, 1969), *Muslim Magnum .357* (1986), *Mistah*:³ *Mga Mandirigma* (Mistah: Warriors, 1994), *Captive* (2012) and *Bagong Buwan* (New Moon, 2001). In studying these films, I argue that representation of Philippine Muslims in films changed over time, and is affected by the prevailing government policies and people's perceptions of Muslim-Christian relations. The films will be discussed chronologically (dates released) and placed in the social and political contexts in which they were produced and viewed, from the American colonial era to the post independence period.

The Philippine Muslims I am focusing on are the "Moros," born Muslims who trace their lineages to pre-colonial families in Mindanao and Sulu who are also identified with thirteen ethnic

¹ The choice of films depended mainly on availability and that Muslims are a major part of the story. I intended to select one film from each decade but was unable to locate films on Muslims from the 1940s and 1970s.

² Badjau is one of the tribes in the southernmost part of the Philippines. They have been described as pagans (Teo 1989) but have also been included in the list of thirteen Muslim tribes in the Philippines. There are Muslim Badjaos but there are also converts to various Christian denominations.

³ "Mistah" is the term used by upperclassmen of the Philippine Military Academy for each other. It implies a sense of belonging, similar to being fraternity brothers.

groups in the Philippines.⁴ The Spaniards called the Muslims “Moros” (Moors) in a derogatory way but in the course of the Muslim rebellion in the 1970s, members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) began to transcode (Hall 1997) the word to connote the courage, bravery and heroism of the Moros whose rich political and cultural heritage was not diluted by colonialism. Ethnic Muslims have now been using the term Moro for individuals and *Bangsa Moro* (Moro nation) for the collective (Angeles, 2010:48).

Theoretical Orientation

In her work on religion and film, Margaret Miles notes that films arise in and respond to concrete historical circumstances while at the same time endeavor to make the viewers see what the director wants to communicate. Both director and viewer bring in their respective backgrounds including their social location, race and class in presenting a story on the one hand, and in interpreting the meanings being conveyed by the stories (Miles, 1996:11). As peoples belonging to ethnic groups bound by a single, albeit minority religion, Moros are depicted as the “other” who, as Plate says, exhibit characteristics that differ from the majority of the population. “Otherness is used to denote that which resides outside the margins of the dominant cultural representations, outside the social-symbolic order” (Plate 1999:4). Plate’s “other” is Said’s *Orient* (Said, 1978), upon whom the West exercises power and which is viewed in negative terms. The *Orient* is seen as barbaric, punitive, stagnant and inferior while the West is rational, dynamic, progressive and superior. Said notes how Islam and Muslims have been demonized by the West and he surveys Muslim representation in Orientalist literature. Such views of Muslims have

⁴Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Molbog, JamaMapun, Kalibogon, Sangil, Yakan, Palawani, Kalagan, Iranun, Badjao

continued on, and were in fact heightened after 9/11, with “terrorist” now added to characterizations of Muslims.

This study is also guided by the works of Stuart Hall (1997) and of Jean and John Comaroff who studied Christianity and colonialism in Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 2002). Although Hall had focused on language as one of the media through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in culture (Hall 1997), I pay attention to both words and the moving image since they complement each other in the production of meaning. The Comaroffs’ study is also relevant in the Philippine colonial setting as the colonizers imposed upon the colonized, in this case, the non-Muslim Filipinos, the primacy of their culture and education. The latter eventually absorbed the idea of superiority of the dominant colonial minority – and the aspiration to be like them. Colonization of consciousness, as observed by the Comaroffs in Africa, reverberated in the Philippine setting where the desire to be like the colonizer became manifest in different aspects of people’s lives. Renato Constantino saw this as the “miseducation of the Filipino” (Constantino 1970).

Multiple Binaries in the Philippine Colonial Landscape

Muslim resistance to Spanish Christianizing efforts and intrusion into their commercial activities in the Sulu zone (Warren, 2007) generated negative descriptions of Muslims that were recorded in various documents of empire. As shown in Said’s analysis of orientalist description of Orientals or Arabs (Said, 1978: 38) so too did Spanish colonial literature on the Philippines, especially the reports of missionaries. Those reports described the Muslims as “cunning, hypocrites, traitors, swindlers, suspicious, cowards,

unaccommodating and persistent. They are obliging in words but do not accomplish much in action and for these reasons, are a great hindrance to conversion of the country” (Montero y Vidal, 1886, 383-384). There are numerous references to Islam as the false religion, as well as calls for punishment of Muslims who are described as insolent, pirates and deceitful (Viana, 1903:230).

One of the forms of Muslim resistance to colonial rule that contributed to the negative views of Muslims is the *juramentado*,⁵ or *parang sabil*⁶ -- a type of ritual suicide sanctioned and even encouraged by religious leaders during the colonial period. The Moro doing this is called a *mujahid*⁷ or a *sabil*, and upon his death, is considered a *shahid*.⁸ The recitation of the Qur'an, praying, reading other religious texts and purification of the *mujahid*'s body as led by the *pandita*⁹ on the eve of the attack, sacralizes the anti-colonial action. The *mujahid* then changes into a white outfit, symbolizing purity. In the morning of the next day, he would go to a public place with the intention of killing the colonial soldiers but in a fit of frenzy kills whoever comes his way. The *juramentado* is usually shot and killed but dies a martyr/*shahid*, and is immediately buried. Such form of resistance to colonial rule, which was not the norm in warfare, contributed to the perception of the Moros as “blade-waving aggressive warriors who were quick to anger, ready to kill with little or no provocation and could not be trusted” (Angeles, 2010:35).

When the United States occupied the Philippines in 1898, they saw the Muslims as a problem inherited from Spain. The Americans did not impose a religion but they put Muslims and other indigenous peoples under the administration of the Bureau of non-Christian Tribes

⁵Spanish term for “one who has taken an oath.”

⁶ Tausugs use this term. *Prang* is from the Malay word *perang*, which means war and *sabil* is the shortened form of the Arabic *fi sabil Allah*, meaning “in the path of God.” It is a form of individual struggle (jihad) to fight in the path of God. For the institution of the *juramentado*, see Cesar A. Majul (1973). *Muslims in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Asian Center, University of the Philippines. It is a form of ritual suicide, directed against soldiers of the colonial government.

⁷ One who engages in a *jihad* (struggle), or one who strives.

⁸ martyr

⁹Religious leader, an imam.

(Gowing, 1977), thereby reinforcing otherness on the basis of religious identity. Such otherness and the notion of colonial superiority was expressed by President William McKinley who told a group of ministers from Christian denominations that America had the mission to “educate the Filipinos, uplift, civilize and Christianize them” (Rushling, 1903). This marked the beginning of America’s *mission civilatrice* in the Philippines.

By the time the United States granted political independence to the Philippines in 1946, multiple binaries reflecting both institutional and individual Islamophobia were already in place, describing Christians and Muslims in the country in terms of: us/them; good/bad; believers/heathens; civilized/savage; rational/fanatic; trustworthy/deceitful, and other opposing combinations, with the positives used for the Christian Filipinos and the negatives for the Moros. Such binaries are reflected in various media including film, which not only reinforced the negative perceptions but also provided sources for the social construction of Moros by non-Muslim Filipinos.

The American Period

Between the years 1912 to 1933, there were 75 silent films made in the Philippines, two of which were about Moros: *Tarhata* and *Moro Pirates* (San Diego, 2011). These films are no longer available but current film archivists in the Philippines contend that *Brides of Sulu* is a merger of these two silent films, reworked for distribution to the American market. There is no dialogue¹⁰ in the movie, but the running narration is interspersed with music and the sound of drums. The film’s prologue states that the simple love story is based upon facts and the rites, rituals and

¹⁰ The absence of dialogue is part of the reason why film archivists in the Philippines believe that *Brides of Sulu* is a composite of two earlier silent films, *Tarhata* and *Moro Pirates*.

ceremonies and portrayals of “the hatred of the ‘Mohameddan’ Moro for the unbeliever is not fiction” (*Brides of Sulu*, 1934). The movie is part documentary and part love story where a Datu’s¹¹ daughter, Benita, elopes with a non-Muslim pearl diver, Assan, but they are captured and returned by the father’s “Moro warriors” (*Brides of Sulu* 1934). Benita insists on marrying Assan and not the man she was betrothed to. The Datu relents, on condition that Assan converts to Islam, which he does.

The film is rich in ethnographic information, which the narrator ignores and instead, emphasizes the isolation, the backward culture and difference of Moros from the rest of the Philippines and other peoples. by showing the distance between the coast of California and the Sulu islands. The narrator speaks about the place of bladed weapons in Sulu society saying that a man is “never without his deadly *barong bolo* or *kris*¹²” (*Brides of Sulu*, 1934). Ownership of a *barong* or *kris* has been viewed, as an accouterment of masculinity among the Moros and men with bladed weapons attached to their waists was a common sight in Mindanao and Sulu. To non-Muslims, however, it evokes fear, especially since these are the weapons used by the *juramentados*.

Negative characteristics of Moros and the America’s civilizing roles are highlighted in the film *Real Glory* (1939), a Samuel Goldwyn production set in Mindanao, Philippines in 1906, at a time when the US colonial government was withdrawing troops from the island. Five American military officers are left in camp Mysang to recruit and train a native constabulary that would take over the Americans’ job of protecting the people. Gary Cooper is cast as Dr. Canavan, who takes care of the health of trainees.

¹¹Datus are part of the ruling structure with their territorial jurisdiction under the Sultan.

¹²Bladed weapons popular among Muslims in southern Philippines. A kris is a double-edged long knife that had either wavy or straight edges. A barong is shorter and leaf-shaped.

The movie opens with a chaotic scene - people running, men being killed, Moros with raised *barongs* and *krises* on one hand and another grabbing women and children for enslavement. This is just a prelude to more destruction of lives and properties by the Moros and in this case, a ferocious Moro leader, Alipang, and his men. A priest tells Canavan that the only thing a Moro is afraid of is to be buried in pigskin as the latter believes it would send him to hell.¹³ Taking this cue, Canavan makes a captured Moro wear pigskin in front of the trainees and the villagers. The Moro is terrified, struggles to move away from the pigskin and is transformed, from a brave Moro about to do a *juramentado* to a crying coward, thus eliminating the trainees' fear of the Moros. Canavan also deals with the cholera crisis so he becomes the health police, teaching and enforcing sanitation rules, burning infected houses, taking care of the sick and practically saving the community. Having completed his mission after the Americans and trainees defeat the Moros who attacked the camp, Canavan leaves as a hero and savior, with Miguel, a Moro, in tow. Miguel has metamorphosed from a half-naked Moro boy to a white suited young man, complete with a straw hat. In Miguel, the Moro identity is conveniently left behind and a new one taken, this time with American flavor.

The Moro as deceitful is demonstrated in several instances in the film, particularly in the person of the Datu who, while friendly to the Americans, gives information to Alipang, arranges for a *juramentado* who kills an American officer, and steers American soldiers and trainees to an ambush by the Moros. The film highlights the colonial impression of the Moro as described in Spanish and American documents but does not delve into the reasons why Moros demonstrated such behaviors against the colonial environment.¹⁴

¹³ Gowing (1977) notes that Americans buried slain *juramentados* with pig carcass as a way of discouraging the practice during the American period in Mindanao.

¹⁴ Moros resorted to becoming *juramentados* after organized resistance against the colonizers failed. See Gowing (1977).

The Post-Independence Period

One of the classics in Philippine film history is *Badjao* (1957), a love story that deals with issues of identity and belonging in two Philippine tribes. The Badjaos are pagan sea nomads while the Tausugs are Muslims who live on land but also use the sea as a source of livelihood. The Tausug sense of superiority and claims of proprietary rights over the sea are readily presented in the opening scene where Tausug men tell Hassan, the Badjao, that he does not have the right to be in that sea, then burn his boat. Hassan and his father meet with the Tausug chief, Datu Tahil who assures them of his protection and declares that Tausugs abide by the Qur'an that sets punishments to whoever sins. Hassan's father asks whether the Qur'an treats everyone (Tausug or Badjao) equally but the Datu does not answer directly, only saying that he is the judge, Qur'an has the punishment. Hassan meets and falls in love with Datu Tahil's daughter, Bala Amai but before marrying her, Datu Tahil requires Hassan to convert to Islam, give up his Badjao identity and live as a Tausug, which Hassan accepts. When Hassan refuses to accede to Datu Tahil's demand that he dive for more blue pearls found in the Badjao area for Tahil's monetary gains, their home is burned. Hassan realizes that his acceptance among the Tausug is contingent upon his usefulness to them so he decides to return to his Badjao community with Bala Amai and their child but not without seeing Datu Tahil first and delivering an indictment against the Tausugs' sense of power, superiority and authority and lack of commitment to Islam while Badjaos, although pagans, are honorable and he would rather return to them than live among Tausugs as a slave to their greed.

Perlas ng Silangan (Pearl of the Orient, 1969), is set in 1681 during the Spanish period. Amid, a Moro escapee from a Spanish ship, falls for Dayang Mahalina, the Sultan's daughter.

The Sultan requires Amid to undergo trials meant to test a man's bravery and perseverance before he could marry his daughter. Amid is pitted against Datu Hamid who is also interested in Dayang Mahalina. The Sultan declares Amid as the rightful winner and in a display of compassion, Amid requests the Sultan to free the slaves he defeated in the contests. Datu Hamid on the other hand, responds to his defeat by getting his followers to attack the community as *juramentados*. Scenes of bloody encounters among Muslims and the deceitful character of Datu Hamid, however, overshadow Amid's sense of humanity, thus, giving the impression that Amid is the exceptional Muslim. Towards the end of the film, after the Spanish defeated Muslims in a battle, the Spanish Captain says they came to spread Christianity and civilization peacefully and did not desire the conflict, thus raising questions as to who is being blamed for the bloody encounters: the Muslims who defended themselves or the Spanish who attacked?

The Martial Law Years and Beyond

President Marcos cited the existence of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a Muslim secessionist movement, as one of the reasons he declared Martial Law in 1972. The MNLF called for the establishment of an independent Islamic state in southern Philippines and insisted on the right of the Moros to self-determination, after centuries of marginalization, deprivation and neglect by the Philippine government. In the search for solutions to end the war and in response to pressures of Middle Eastern countries, President Marcos started making concessions to the Muslims, including issuing a presidential decree declaring Islam as part of Philippine national heritage. Other decrees provided for the creation of an Islamic bank, establishment of the Maharlikha Village in the metro Manila area for Muslims, scholarship programs for Muslim youth

and creation of the Institute of Islamic Studies at the University of the Philippines, among others. Sultan Qudarat, known for his resistance to Spanish colonial forces and who was maligned in colonial literature, was declared a national hero and postage stamps were issued in his honor. This time, an environment favorable to the promotion and practice of Islam had been created; Islam and the Muslims have been acknowledged, and given space in the public square.

Muslim Magnum .357 was released in 1981, the year President Marcos lifted martial law. Lt. Jamal Rasul is a Muslim undercover police officer summoned to Manila to help solve crimes perpetuated by a powerful syndicate. Except to his superiors, Rasul keeps his Muslim identity for reasons unexplained but reveals it in his solitary moments, like when praying over the graves of two young boys who had earlier helped him and were killed by the criminals for doing so. At the grave, Rasul invokes the oneness of Allah and the notion of life after death in heaven while vowing to find the killers and obtain justice for the innocent boys. While preparing for this, Rasul prepares his weapons, prays, and then ties a strip of cloth on his head – actions evocative of *juramentado* preparations.

All the bullets found on the dead criminals are traced to Rasul's gun, a Magnum .357, so the Chief orders his arrest. This leads to his confrontation with Capt. Rios who turns out to be the leader of the syndicate. When Rios tells Rasul that Muslims belong to the sea and have no rights, Rasul responds with a soliloquy recalling Muslim resistance to the colonizers.

Notions of Muslim otherness appear in several instances in the film through the dialogue like: "You Muslims, you are all about bravery but you lack brains"; "Muslims really have a different character... his bravery is beyond compare. He can finish us all"; including Rasul's own reminder to Rios that Muslims "are a patient and persistent people who will never back out especially in a fight." (*Muslim Magnum .357*). Rasul is the good Muslim, but his having taken the

law into his hands play into the stereotype of angry and punitive Muslims. The film ends with Rasul in the mosque, praying with bloodied hands while the chanting of the Qur'an is heard.

Two films are set against the war in southern Philippines: *Mistah: Mga Mandirigma* (Mistah: Warriors, 1994) and *Bagong Buwan* (New Moon, 2001). *Mistah: Mandirigma* deals with soldiers and Muslim fighters sacrificing their lives and families and having the same feelings of loss over their fallen comrades. Both sides confront the ugliness of war, experience the tensions within their respective groups and also face disciplinary actions from their superiors. The war scenes in *Mistah* are intense and several scenes show Muslim fighters' brutality towards the soldiers, one of whom was tied to a tree and repeatedly slashed. Both sides engage in shooting, slashing and decapitating. Sgt. Carino (the central character) is tormented by the sight of destruction and death around him, and the fact that Filipinos are killing each other. He declares that it is war that kills people, not Muslims or Christians.

Soldiers and Muslim rebels attempt peace negotiations and observance of ceasefire, only to break them because of mutual suspicions. The Lieutenant tells the Muslim commander about government plans for the Muslims, but to the latter, Christians are the problem because Mindanao belongs to the Muslims – reminiscent of Rasul's discourse in *Magnum* .357.

In 1996, the MNLF and the Philippine government signed the Final Peace Agreement but other groups like the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), refused to recognize the agreement, and continued to demand secession from the republic through armed conflict. In 2000, President Joseph Estrada declared an all-out war against the MILF and ordered the bombing of its camps. This provides the setting for *Bagong Buwan*, which was released in 2001.

Bagong Buwan explores the issues that plague Muslim-Christian relations together with the causes and effects of war through family discussions, especially between the brothers Ahmad,

the pacifist doctor, and Musa, a commander of the MILF. Both are committed to helping people but while Ahmad does it through his medical skills regardless of people's religious orientation, Musa defines his people as the Muslims for whom justice must be won. Presenting two brothers with very different orientations goes against monolithic views of Muslims.

When a soldier, Lt. Ricarte goes to the house of Datu Ali, an elder in the community, then begins to touch the ancient *barong* hanging on the wall, Datu Ali, stops him as the *barong* serves as a symbol of his people's continuing struggles. Moments later, as the conflict around them intensifies, Ali takes the *barong*, binds it to his wrist, and then goes out charging at the soldiers until he is shot –the way the *juramentados* were in earlier years.

The desire for peace is echoed throughout *Bagong Buwan* by several characters: Ahmad, Ahmad's wife Fatimah, Jason, the Christian peace worker and even Francis, the Christian boy. Ahmad emphasizes "the importance of human life, the need to fight for their land and their rights but God also gave them the right to live in peace and harmony" (*Bagong Buwan*, 2001).

In 2001, President Gloria Arroyo declared an "all out peace policy" (Nocum, 2001) but the years since then have been interrupted by encounters between different Muslim factions and government forces, as well as kidnapping for ransom. In May 2001, the Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim secessionist group, kidnapped international tourists and local citizens from a resort on the island of Palawan. This event inspired the movie *Captive*, which was released in 2012. *Captive* focuses on the conditions of captivity under the Abu Sayyaf whose members displayed conflicting personalities - reading the Qur'an at one time, then being brutal and violent at times, praying, then beheading a captive, but also capable of compassion, sharing food and trying to give some comfort to captives under challenging conditions. Whatever amount of compassion they may have shown, however, the Abu Sayyaf, as depicted in the film and in real life, subject their captives to

brutal treatment while claiming to be observant Muslims fighting for their land and their rights as marginalized peoples in Christian-dominated Philippines.

Conclusion

Much of the representations of Philippine Muslims in the films studied reflect the stereotypes that were shaped by the Filipino experience of colonial rule. The image of the fierce Moro, unfriendly to non-Muslims, deceitful and untrustworthy, dominates *Brides of Sulu* and *Real Glory*. Even if some characters like Miguel, the Moro boy in *Real Glory* are presented as peaceful, Alipang, Datu and other “warriors” provide strong contrasts to the Filipino trainees and Americans; particularly Dr. Canavan, an agent of America’s civilizing mission in the Philippines and who emerges as a savior and hero.

Moro bravery and strong sense of identity vis-à-vis non-Moros are portrayed in all the films and a Moro claim to superiority is prominently displayed in *Badjao*. The Tausug Datu’s requiring a Badjao to convert to Islam before marrying his daughter is premised on the idea that he risks losing the daughter to an inferior tribe. The Badjao father himself affirms this sense of inferiority in the conversation with his son Hassan before the wedding.

The tests required of Assad (*Badjao*) and Amid (*Perlas ng Silangan*) before they could marry the Muslim women is intended to measure Moro courage and willingness to fight anyone even if it involves putting to death the slaves defeated in a contest involving bladed weapons. Over and above the courage and bravery displayed (whether provoked or not), Muslims are presented as completely other, with a different religion and while they consider themselves

superior to the pagan Badjaos, they are viewed as inferior and different from the Christianized Filipinos thus reflecting Said's views on orientalism and Plate's "other."

From the earlier movies of *Brides of Sulu*, *Real Glory* and *Badjao* where Muslims were the bad guys and the villains, *Magnum .357*, *Mistah: Mandirigma* and *Bagong Buwan* shift in presenting them as heroes and human beings fighting for justice and their rights, and concerned with their families like everyone else. However, the notion of Moros as having caused problems arises in *Bagong Buwan*, particularly when Lt. Ricarte tells the Muslim evacuees to convince their family members involved with the MILF to lay down their arms and join the government in the peace efforts. Within the film, there are some changes in the representation of Muslims but at the same time, some negative perceptions persist. Ahmad emerges as a hero trying to help and protect not only his people but Christians as well. On the other hand, Musa, the rebel brother, is heroically continuing the fight for Moro rights, for justice and equality but at the same time, he is portrayed as impatient and angry. In *Magnum .357*, Lt. Rasul's fearless pursuit of the crime syndicate is laudable but his methods play to the stereotype of Muslims as revengeful. *Real Glory*, *Perlas ng Silangan*, *Magnum .357* and *Bagong Buwan*, movies that span over six decades, all touch on *juramentado* and in doing so, helps perpetuate the idea of Moro violence.

The kidnapping for ransom activities of the Abu Sayyaf as presented in *Captive* rekindle negative perceptions of Muslims. *Captive* is faithful to the story as brought out in memoirs (Burnham 2003), numerous interviews of survivors and others who had something to do with both the kidnapping and its resolution. Muslims themselves decry the Abu Sayyaf for their criminal activities and distinguish themselves from the latter but film is a very powerful medium. The sight of Abu Sayyaf on screen, shouting *Allahu Akbar* after shooting or beheading, reading the Qur'an, praying, telling the captives how Islam honors women yet manipulating them and

inflicting violence on the innocent captives reinforce the negative views created by the colonial powers and perpetuated through time.

There have been changes in the depiction of Muslims but at the same time, colonial assessment of the Muslim character continue to be incorporated in recent films. Muslims are no longer as isolated and confined to the south as they were depicted in *Brides of Sulu*, *Badjao*, and *Real Glory* and are now in most regions of the country. This situation allows for increased Muslim and non-Muslims interactions that can provide countervailing situations to the differences highlighted in the films and may, over time, contribute to more positive changes in the portrayal of Muslims in Philippine cinema.

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